



Frequently Asked Questions

Mitigation Grant Programs

<http://www.fema.gov/fima/hmgrp>

Q: What is the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)?

A: The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides grants to States, local governments, and Indian tribes for long-term hazard mitigation projects after a major disaster declaration caused by an event such as Hurricane Katrina. The purpose of the program is to reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the recovery from a disaster.

HMGP funds can be used on public or private property. The projects must provide a long-term solution to a specific problem, such as:

- Acquiring real property from willing sellers and demolishing or relocating of buildings to convert the property to open space.
- Retrofitting structures and facilities to minimize damages from high winds, earthquake, flood, wildfire, or other natural hazards.
- Elevation of flood-prone structures.
- Development and initial implementation of vegetative management programs.
- Minor flood control projects that do not duplicate the flood prevention activities of other Federal agencies.
- Localized flood control projects, such as certain ring levees and floodwall systems, that are designed specifically to protect critical facilities.
- Post-disaster building code related activities that support building code officials during the reconstruction process.

Q: How does the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program work?

A: As part of disaster recovery, local jurisdictions select projects that could reduce or eliminate property damage from future disasters, and submit a grant application to the State. Indian tribes and certain non-profit organizations can also apply, and local governments can apply on behalf of individual property owners.

The State's administrative plan governs how projects are selected for funding. Program criteria are designed to ensure that the most cost-effective and appropriate projects are selected for funding. Federal law requires that the projects be part of an overall mitigation strategy for the disaster area.

The State selects project applications and forwards applications consistent with State mitigation planning objectives to FEMA for eligibility review. FEMA conducts a final eligibility review to ensure compliance with Federal regulations. FEMA can fund up to 75 percent of costs for each project. Either the State or applicant covers the remaining 25 percent, though it need not be cash. In-kind technical services and materials may also be used.

Q: What are the Federal criteria for grant approval?

A: The project must be cost-effective – a project's potential savings must be more than the cost of implementing the project. It must comply with Federal environmental laws and regulations, and be technically feasible. The project must also be consistent with the State's hazard mitigation priorities. In addition, Federal law requires States and local jurisdictions to have mitigation plans in place to be eligible for HMGP funds. The plans identify hazards, assess community needs, and lay out a strategy for reducing risks associated with natural disasters. The plans provide direction and focus for mitigation activities in the community.

Q: How can a locality obtain HMGP funds if it doesn't have a mitigation plan?

A: Localities that don't have a plan will need to work with their States and FEMA to begin the mitigation planning process as quickly as reasonably possible in order to receive HMGP funds. The mitigation planning process is necessary for determining strategies for protecting homes and businesses from future disasters. The process ensures a community-wide approach to mitigation with input from many stakeholders, such as community leaders, engineers, floodplain managers, land-use planners, and the public.

Most localities in Alabama have mitigation plans in place. However, very few localities in Louisiana and Mississippi currently have such plans.

Q: When will HMGP money begin flowing into the States?

A: Historically, HMGP funds have been awarded anywhere from a couple of months to two years after a disaster is declared. Funding largely depends on how quickly local jurisdictions can identify their needs and prepare an application. In the case of Katrina, many communities are still focusing on basic public health and safety issues. Long-term mitigation activities will come later.

Q: How much HMGP grant money will be available to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama following Hurricane Katrina?

A: FEMA won't know how much money will be available to each State until the rebuilding process gets underway. HMGP funding is based on a percentage of the total Federal funds for repairing roads, bridges, and other infrastructure (called Public Assistance) and individual and family grants (called Individual Assistance). The HMGP may provide up to 7.5 percent of the total amount paid for Public and Individual Assistance in each State.

For example, if FEMA provides \$100 million in Public and Individual Assistance to a State, \$7,500,000 in HMGP funds would be made available to communities in that State. If FEMA provided \$1 billion, \$750 million in HMGP funds would be available. In the case of Katrina, a great deal of damage assessment work needs to be completed before total mitigation assistance can be estimated; however, funding can begin as soon as plans are set.



Q: Will homeowners be forced to sell their home if a community is granted funding for an HMGP acquisition project?

A: Acquisition projects are voluntary and homeowners are never forced to sell their property. The decision to purchase damaged property is made by the local government and the property owners, not FEMA.

Once an acquisition project is approved, the community uses Federal funds to purchase the home or building, and the land is restricted to open space, recreation, or wetlands in perpetuity. Property owners who decide to sell their property in these circumstances are able to recoup a part of their investment in the property.

Q: Considering the devastation from Katrina, will communities be able to afford a 25 percent match for HMGP funds?

A: FEMA will continue to work closely with the States to help the local communities rebuild and recover as quickly as possible. Once the damage assessment phase is completed, all levels of government, including Congress, will need to address this issue. Rebuilding funds will come from a number of programs, including HMGP.

Q: What is the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Program?

A: The Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Program provides funding to States, Indian tribes, and local governments for implementing cost-effective hazard mitigation activities before disasters occur. The program provides applicants with an opportunity to raise risk awareness and reduce disaster losses through planning and project grants. Eligible activities include mitigation planning, retrofitting structures, acquiring structures in high-risk areas and returning the property to open space, and constructing storm shelters and safe rooms.

Eligible applicants are state emergency management agencies or similar offices of a State, and Indian tribal governments. Local governments and state institutions such as State hospitals and universities can apply as sub-applicants. In addition, State or local governments can apply on behalf of private non-profit organizations and institutions. PDM applicants compete for funding on a national basis and funding is subject to a 75 percent Federal/25 percent non-Federal cost share.

Q: What is FEMA's Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA)?

A: Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) is a pre-disaster program that provides funding to States and communities for implementing measures that reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings, manufactured homes, and other structures insurable under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). FMA was created to reduce claims under the NFIP. Program grants are available for mitigation planning, projects, and technical assistance. Communities must participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to receive FMA grants. FMA projects include the elevation, acquisition, and relocation of NFIP-insured structures.

States administer the program, establish mitigation priorities, evaluate grant applications, and award grants. States are encouraged to prioritize FMA project grant applications that include repetitive loss properties. Repetitive loss structures are those that have sustained two or more losses, each exceeding \$1000, within a ten year period. FEMA may contribute up to 75 percent of the total cost; at least 25 percent of the costs must be provided by a non-Federal source. FMA is funded at \$20 million nationally.